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Articles in Today's Clips Wednesday, March 26, 2008

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Article published Mar 25, 2008

Father gives up parental rights in incest case

By Karen Smith
Mirror Staff Writer

It's a sad case. A Berkley man who works for a state agency charged with protecting children takes in a 15-year-old foster girl, sexually assaults her on several occasions while she is living with him and his family and, after adopting her, impregnates her when she is 17, fathering his own grandchild.

But it has a good ending, according to Oakland County Assistant Prosecutor Robert Giles, who handles other child abuse cases as a member of the prosecutor's child sexual assault section.

The daughter, now 22, has become a productive member of society who's very protective of her daughter, now 3.

"She's taking care of a child she didn't want," Giles said.

The father, Gerald Dale Snapp, pleaded no contest last week to eight felony charges, voluntarily gave up his parental rights to three other children, and is scheduled to be sentenced April 23 to up to 30 years in prison.

A no contest plea has the same effect as a guilty plea, though a defendant pleading no contest neither admits nor disputes a charge.

Snapp was bound over for trial following a preliminary examination Feb. 12 in 45A District Court, in which the daughter testified about the assaults that took place twice when she was 15 and another time when she 16 while she was a foster child living in his home on Cummings and when he had intercourse with her after she was adopted by him in September 2003.

DNA testing determined with 99.99 percent certainty that Snapp is the 3-year-old's father, according to court documents.

Snapp pleaded no contest to the criminal charges March 27 and to the neglect charges March 28 in Oakland County Circuit Court.

Giles said Snapp may have pleaded no contest because of the parental rights trial. "He was in the middle of a neglect trial — that is a civil proceeding. His guilty pleas could have been used against him."

The neglect trial for Snapp's wife, Hope, is scheduled to continue April 4 before Oakland County Circuit Judge Martha D. Anderson.

The couple's two biological daughters and adopted son have been removed from their home on Cummings.

Snapp worked for the Michigan Department of Human Services at the time of his arrest, though he did not deal directly with children in his position.

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Trial set for Commerce Township teenager charged in baby's death

By RANDAL YAKEY
Of The Oakland Press

The trial of former Mercyhurst College student Teri Rhodes, accused of killing her newborn daughter, will begin at 9:30 a.m. June 17 according to a ruling by presiding Erie County Judge William R. Cunningham.

Rhodes, 19, faces charges of homicide, concealing the death of a child, endangering the welfare of a child, recklessly endangering another person and abuse of a corpse.

On Aug. 12, Rhodes gave birth in her Erie, Pa. apartment before going to the hospital complaining of internal bleeding and cramps, investigators said. Police said the child was found dead inside a plastic bag in the bathtub of her apartment.

A pair of scissors found nearby was taken as evidence, according to the Erie County prosecutor's office. Rhodes was released on \$25,000 bond and allowed to return home to Commerce Township to await trial, according to Erie County's 5th Ward District Court.

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http://www.theoaklandpress.com/stories/032608/loc_20080326435.shtml



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Published March 26, 2008

Missing boy found inside his home

Morning update

Derek Wallbank
Lansing State Journal

WATERLOO TWP. - A five-year-old boy was found today inside of his home, more than an hour after he was reported missing by his parents.

The boy was supposed to be at a bus stop this morning, but didn't get on the bus, said Don McAlister, chief of the Stockbridge Area Emergency Services Authority.

School officials called the boy's parents to let them know the boy did not arrive at school, and his parents called in turn called police, McAlister said.

About 9:20 a.m., as police and firefighters from across the area huddled in the boy's house developing a search plan, the boy walked into the room.

McAlister said the boy had been hiding under a sewing table.

Stockbridge police had dispatched all available police, ambulance and fire department personnel, in their personal vehicles, to assist in a search for the boy.

Waterloo Township is located south of Stockbridge in Jackson County.

Contact Derek Wallbank at 267-1301 or dwallbank@lsj.com.

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PETOSKEY News-Review

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Child accosting arrest

By Steve Zucker News-Review Staff Writer
Wednesday, March 26, 2008 8:31 AM EDT

An Emmet County couple are facing a slew of criminal charges in connection with allegations that they tried to entice several girls ranging in age from 11 to 17 to engage in sex acts with them or each other.

Mickey Ernest Lauer, 36, and Amanda Lynn Baker, 22, both of Harbor Springs, are facing charges of accosting a child for immoral purposes, distributing obscene matter to children and indecent exposure. The charges are four and two-year felonies and a misdemeanor respectively. Lauer is also facing charges of third degree criminal sexual conduct and fourth degree criminal sexual conduct, a 15-year felony and a two-year charge respectively.

Both are scheduled to face a preliminary examination on the charges on April 9 in 90th District Court.

Police say they learned of the allegations when one of the girls involved told a relative, who in turn notified police.

According to a Michigan State Police affidavit filed in the case, the girls — ages 11, 13, 16 and 17 — told police that during a visit to the defendants' residence in October they were shown photos of Baker engaged in sexual acts. They told police that before getting into a hot tub with the defendants, the defendants allegedly told them they couldn't wear their swimsuits because Lauer is allergic to detergents. The girls told police that Lauer and Baker engaged in sex acts in front of them, and that Lauer sexually touched two of the girls. They also said Lauer asked one of the older girls for sex.

In a news release issued Monday, police said they believe there may be more victims who have not yet been identified. Police are asking anyone who may have information about children or young adults associating with Baker or Lauer under questionable circumstances to call the Petoskey Michigan State Police post at 347-8101.

Both Lauer and Baker are free from custody on a \$10,000 personal recognizance bond.

Steve Zucker ☐ 439-9346 - szucker@petoskeynews.com

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Jury in teacher molestation trial may be split

By SHAUN BYRON

The instructions of what it means to be deadlocked will be read this morning into the record for a jury trying to answer whether James Perry is guilty of molesting two children.

A jury passed at least two notes to Oakland County Circuit Judge Denise Langford-Morris Tuesday, raising suspicions and inquiries over whether they were having difficulty coming to a conclusive verdict.

The subject of those letters wasn't released to the public, although attorneys for both sides said there appeared to be a stalemate.

The instructions may include statements telling the jury to hold to their convictions, but to also attempt to look at what has been said with an open mind and consider what other members have to say.

"Have a safe drive home and get a good night's sleep," Langford-Morris told the jury before sending them home.

This is the second trial for Perry, who was previously convicted for allegedly molesting two kindergartners in a special education classroom in 2005 at Oak Park's Key Elementary School.

Perry had been a kindergarten teacher at the school and is accused of grabbing the two boys - then ages 4 and 5 -- and taking them to the room.

Langford-Morris ordered a new trial when it was revealed that people with information about what may have happened at the time of the alleged molestation came forward. They said police never interviewed them.

Deliberations had started late afternoon Monday, with the jury continuing Tuesday.

They were given an hour break at noon, about an hour before they sent the first note to Langford-Morris.

As the day wore on, members of Perry's church and family stayed on in support of him. The families of the two boys also remained in the courtroom.

Many people fell asleep in the benches, using coats as blankets and awaiting word of a possible verdict.

Each time attorneys were asked to come back into the courtroom, people congregating in the halls immediately walked back inside to see if a verdict was going to be read.

Deliberations will resume at 9 a.m. today on the third floor of the Oakland County Circuit Court.

Contact staff writer Shaun Byron at (248) 745-4685 or shaun.byron@oakpress.com.

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JAMES PERRY TRIAL

Former teacher's fate hangs on vote of single juror

By JOHN WISELY and L.L. BRASIER • Free Press Staff Writers • March 26, 2008

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The fate of a former Oak Park kindergarten teacher accused of raping two boys hangs on the vote of a single juror who disagrees with 11 fellow jurors, according to a note from the jury read in court this morning.

ADVERTISEMENT

James Perry, 34, of Ferndale faces up to life in prison on charges he pulled two kindergartners into a special education classroom at lunchtime and raped them in October 2005.

A jury in his retrial has been deliberating since 2 p.m. Monday without reaching a verdict. This morning, Judge Denise Langford Morris read from the bench two notes the jury sent out Tuesday afternoon indicating they were deadlocked. The first note emerged from the jury room at 3 p.m. Tuesday.

"We are absolutely not going to reach a unanimous verdict," the note read. "There is a fundamental disagreement on the part of a juror. This issue will not be resolved today, tomorrow or next week."

The note asked the judge to consider the jury hung.

In the second note that came out at 4:30 p.m., the jury asked to go home for the night, noting they had not deliberated since their 3 p.m. note and the only thing they were discussing was who the Detroit Lions may draft and how many games of euchre the jury would play on Wednesday.

The jury appeared frustrated as Langford Morris ordered all cards to be removed from the jury room as well as any books, magazines, puzzles or other amusements. Jurors cannot use telephones in the jury room, either. The judge read the standard instructions on how to resolve a deadlock and then ordered them to resume their deliberations.

The jury was 40 minutes late getting into court because one juror was late. It was unclear if the late juror was the holdout.

Find this article at:

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080326/NEWS03/80326037>

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Wednesday, March 26, 2008

One juror deadlocks panel in deliberations of ex-Oak Park teacher

Mike Martindale / The Detroit News

PONTIAC -- An Oakland Circuit Court judge Wednesday ordered all cards, books, newspapers, telephones, and "games of any kind" removed from a jury room so deadlocked jurors in the case of an ex-kindergarten teacher charged with sexual assault can focus entirely on their deliberations.

Judge Denise Langford-Morris made the unusual instruction to jurors in the trial of James Norman Perry after jurors sent her a note late Tuesday saying no progress was being made in their deliberations after a day in half of efforts because a "line in the sand" had been drawn by one juror.

The note, read by Langford-Morris in court, said that despite efforts and Langford-Morris's instructions, the only discussions taking place in the jury room were about who "the Lions are going to draft" and "how many euchre games" jurors would play on Wednesday.

Perry, 34, of Ferndale is charged with first and second-degree criminal sexual conduct in alleged sexual assaults on two boys, four and five years old, at the Key Elementary School in Oak Park.

Perry was convicted of the offenses by a jury in a 2006 trial but Langford-Morris tossed out the verdict after defense attorneys said they had found new witnesses, never interviewed by investigators, that would testify the assaults could not have taken place as described by the boys.

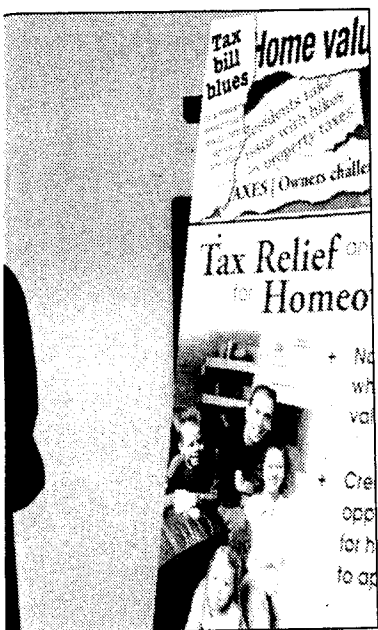
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NEWS



Courtesy photo

**or committee hearings on a pack-
homeowners during a press con-**

essfully approach the board a home-
typically must have comparable real
idies and paperwork that the average
person just can't pull together that
It's not a fair system and we're ready
e it."

nce the bills have been referred to the
ommittee on tax policy, no action has
de and now Moore and Horn are call-
committees to hold hearings on the

time for the Legislature to get behind
kage so families can stay in their
Horn said.

ly new car

small percentage of interest,"
Branda said. But, he added that by
buying, "We can always sell the
car."

The location of where to buy the
car from also required some
research, as the commissioners
looked at not only Richardson's,
but also Thelen Ford Mercury in
Standish.

"We decided we wanted to do
business in the county. We wanted
to try to keep our money in the
county," Branda said.

The board approved the pur-
chase of the new car at a meeting
on March 11.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

Blue ribbon campaign raises awareness

By Tim Barnum

Staff writer

ARENAC COUNTY — In
2006 in Arenac County there
were 21.5 confirmed cases of
child abuse or neglect per every
1,000 children, according to the
Kids Count In Michigan report
by the Michigan League of
Human Services.

According to the annual report
that focuses on varying issues in
regards to Michigan children,
this is almost twice the state aver-
age.

"Our numbers (in the Kids
Count report) are higher than
we'd like them to be in abuse and
neglect," said Arenac County
Department of Human Services
supervisor and member of the
Child Protection Council (CPC),
Brian Millikin.

And during April the CPC,
which includes members of the
Department of Human Services,
area schools and the Sterling
Area Health Center, and the Anti-
violence Community Coalition
(AVCC) of Arenac County are
attempting to make people aware
of child abuse to help prevent it
in the future by conducting its

5th annual blue ribbon campaign.
April has been chartered by the
state of Michigan as "Child
Abuse Prevention Month." The
charter's funded by Children's
Trust Fund donations made on
state taxes.

"It (blue ribbon campaign) will
make people aware that children
are being abused," said Central
Michigan District Health
Department health educator and
CPC member, Alison Fegan.

"The major goal (of the cam-
paign) is the prevention of child
abuse," Millikin said.

Fegan added that the blue rib-
bon campaign hangs ribbons and
fliers at local businesses to
increase awareness and also is
setting up change collection cans
at the businesses to collect funds
for the Arenac County Baby
Pantry located on North Forest
Street in Standish.

"Every bit (of change) helps,"
Fegan said.

The CPC and AVCC will wrap
up Child Abuse Prevention
Month with a seminar on sub-
stance abuse and sexual assault
and how they relate to child
abuse on April 24 at the Saganing
Community Center.

— Throughout April, the
"Arenac County Independent"
will feature multiple stories on
"Child Abuse Prevention
Month."

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
Kalamazoo Gazette

Tuesday, March 25, 2008

Give to Children's Trust Fund to help end abuse

It's tax time again! Not a good thought for most, but if you want to feel good about tax time, you can help support and expand local child abuse and neglect prevention programs by a donation to the Children's Trust Fund on line 22 of your Michigan Income Tax Form.

As Gov. Jennifer Granholm said when she reinstated the check-off in 2006, ``Children are the future of this great state and by contributing to the Children's Trust Fund you are making an investment in Michigan's future that is guaranteed to pay off."

The Children's Trust Fund (CTF) is the only statewide, non-profit organization in Michigan dedicated solely to the prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect. The Children's Trust Fund, established in 1982, provides financial assistance to individuals, state and local government entities, including counties cities, and non-profit organizations, to implement specific programs promoted by CTF.

The Van Buren County Child Abuse and Neglect Council annually receives \$5,000 from CTF and is currently working to expand its capacity here in the county.

Remember to check line 22 on your Michigan Income Tax Form to help Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect, not only in Van Buren County, but in all of Michigan.

Jean Dahms

Executive Secretary and Program Coordinator, Van Buren County Council
for the Prevention of Child Abuse and
Neglect Inc.



Divided Michigan Senate approves health care budget

3/25/2008, 5:07 p.m. ET

By **DAVID EGGERT**
The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — A divided Michigan Senate on Tuesday passed a spending plan that would provide health care to the poor and disabled.

But Republicans and Democrats got into some skirmishes over whether young adults should be denied Medicaid and if courts should be created for the mentally ill in the \$12.5 billion Department of Community Health spending plan that takes effect Oct. 1.

Republicans blocked Democrats' efforts to continue allowing 19- and 20-year-olds to qualify for Medicaid, saving \$14.5 million.

Sen. Deb Cherry, a Burton Democrat, said taking away Medicaid coverage for those young adults is foolish. Some are living on their own after leaving foster care, she said, and others would turn to more costly care in the emergency room if they don't have health insurance.

"I don't think we wish to have those young adults without health insurance," Cherry said. "They need it, we should be providing it."

Republicans responded that Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm has in the past proposed not allowing new 19- and 20-year-olds to be covered by Medicaid. The federal government doesn't require Medicaid coverage for that age group.

Sen. Roger Kahn, a Saginaw Republican overseeing the community health budget, said lawmakers shouldn't lose sight that overall spending would increase \$434 million, or 3.6 percent, over current spending in the Senate bill, which passed 20-18.

He added that Medicaid caseloads aren't growing as fast as expected for the first time in years, which could free up money later on for the extra spending pushed by Democrats.

Besides losing the fight over health care coverage for 19- and 20-year-olds, Democrats were unable to create pilot courts for criminals with mental illnesses, a proposal backed by Granholm. The courts could have diverted some offenders to community-based treatment rather than sending them to jail.

Democrats and Republicans also differed over whether more money should be spent to increase awareness of sexually transmitted diseases, bring meals to seniors, improve access to dental care for underserved children and prevent cancer and other diseases.

Spending on health care ranks second-highest in the state budget, behind only money for K-12 schools.

Besides paying the health costs of Michigan's 1.5 million Medicaid recipients, the Senate-passed bill would increase reimbursements to pharmacists, pay mental health workers more, ban tobacco in psychiatric facilities and add pregnant patients to managed-care plans.

The measure will be considered by the House starting next month. A final deal on that budget and other state spending for the next fiscal year will hinge on revised tax revenue estimates released in May.

Democratic Sen. Jim Barcia of Bay City joined 19 Republicans to pass the community health budget. GOP Sens. Bruce Patterson of Canton and Alan Sanborn of Richmond joined 16 Democrats who voted against it.

Also Tuesday, the Senate passed spending plans for universities, community colleges and the Department of Education. It's expected to approve prison, K-12 and other budgets later this week before leaving for a two-week spring break. The House is on vacation this week and next.

State Staying Out Of DMC/WSU Fight

State Medicaid Director Paul **REINHART** is not getting involved in the nasty dispute between the Detroit Medical Center (DMC) and Wayne State University's (WSU) Medical School over \$12 million in Medicaid payments, calling it a fight between attorneys.

Reinhart, renowned throughout state government and across the country as an expert on the convoluted federal medical program for low-income patients, has spoken with DMC Chief Financial Officer Jay

RISING on this issue, *MIRS* has learned.

But even though Reinhart was quoted in a *Detroit News* article as agreeing with the Wayne State

University side of the fight, he said he is keeping out of it.

"Whatever relationships a public physician group has with DMC is between those two entities," Reinhart

said. "I haven't seen what contracts they have. I have enough trouble running the Medicaid program. I

don't have time to run DMC. They have to interact on their own."

Reinhart runs the state's \$9 billion program that covers the medical insurance needs for 1.6 million

Michigan residents. He said he's "read in the papers" claims by DMC that WSU is in violation of the *Hatch*

Act in that it's double-dipping on its Medicaid payment, thus it's withholding payments (See "**WSU-DMC**

Battle Could Mean State Bailout," 3/17/07).

When asked for his opinion on the situation, Reinhart said, "I dropped out of law school. That sounds

ominously like a legal question. If I were you, I'd ask an attorney."

Department of Community Health Spokesman James **McCURTIS** added that the state department is not

the deciding authority on this issue, however he added the Governor had appointed her own mediator to help resolve the issue.

"They are in negotiations right now," McCurtis said. "We're out of it."

MIRS Capitol Capsule, Monday, March 24, 2008

PETOSKEY News-Review

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Bi-monthly food stamps won't stretch food budget

Monday, March 24, 2008 8:24 AM EDT

Legislation has just passed the state Senate which ought to be thoughtfully considered and vetted, as it could help hungry Michigan families and troubled businesses at the same time.

But we do have questions about a plan to change when food stamp recipients can get their "coupons."

According to the Associated Press, Michigan could become the first state in the nation to issue food stamps twice a month, making fresh produce and meat more available and giving grocery workers steadier hours.

The state's 1.2 million food stamp recipients — the highest number ever — now have their benefits added to a debit card within the first 10 days of the month. They then spend those dollars early in the month, typically in poorer, urban areas where residents may have limited transportation, AP reports.

Each recipient gets an average \$88 a month.

That is not very much money, and won't buy a stalk of celery.

Two percent, or more than one in nine, Michigan residents get food stamps. Eighty percent of benefits go to households with children. The number of food stamp recipients in Michigan has doubled in six years.

Legislation that would require the state to issue food stamp benefits two times a month was approved by the state Senate.

This legislation seems designed mostly to help businesses which get slammed in the first 10 days of the month but get much fewer shoppers for the remaining 20 days. It also benefits unions, whose members are almost laid off for the majority of a month because food stamp recipients all hit the stores at the same time.

It could have the added benefit, though, of allowing more fresh-food purchasing, advocates for the poor say.

We think food stamp recipients can judge for themselves when to "spend" their food stamps. If we are giving them a "hand up" and a not a "hand out," doesn't it makes sense to enable them to budget those purchases and what they buy — in terms of produce and meat — on their own?

Is it patronizing to say they can't manage it, so we have to split up how they are given assistance?

Moreover, we wonder if the real problem is not in when stamps (it's actually electronic now) are issued for use, but how little the stamps can buy. The federal food stamp program assumes families have enough cash of their own plus food stamps to spend \$1.05 per person per meal.

The food stamp bills are House Bill 4923 and Senate Bill 120. The House is expected to take up the measure as well.

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March 26, 2008

3/25/2008 11:41:00 AM

Panttries, shelters get funding hike

Luke Stier
Staff Writer

GREENVILLE - Area organizations looking for financial help soon will be receiving checks from the government.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Emergency Food and Shelter national board has granted Montcalm County \$81,162 to supplement emergency food and shelter programs. That's an increase of \$16,633 from last year.

The money will be distributed among 14 food pantries, three baby pantries and three shelters around the county.

Meanwhile, Ionia County received \$56,357 this year from the same fund and will be distributed to four food pantries and three other emergency fund organizations around the county. This is a \$5,803 increase from last year.

The national board that distributes the money on a county-by-county basis is comprised of representatives from the American Red Cross, Catholic Charities USA, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, Salvation Army, United Jewish Communities and United Way of America.

Locally a board made up of representatives from the American Red Cross, EightCAP Inc., Relief After Violent Encounter (RAVE), Salvation Army, United Way of Montcalm County and area churches helped determine how the funds were awarded to Montcalm County agencies.

Denise Hubbard, United Way of Montcalm County executive director, submitted the final distribution numbers to the national office Monday.

"The grant distribution usually takes place within a couple of weeks," she said.

While this year's funding increase is good news for needy area residents, Hubbard said more help still is needed.

"There is no secret that the needs this year are far greater than what any helping agency can support," she said. "Even though this is \$16,000 more than what we have gotten in the past, and it is going to go a long way, we certainly are not going to fix everybody's problems. There is just a real gap between the needs and serving people fully."

Local agencies will use the money for food, lodging in a mass shelter or hotel, one month's rent or mortgage payment, one month's utility bill, minimal repairs to allow a mass feeding or sheltering facility to function during the program year or equipment necessary to feed or shelter people.

The Greenville Community Church food pantry will use the grant money it receives to purchase food.



Herb Gulembo, director of the Greenville Community Church food pantry, fills a box with food at the pantry Monday afternoon. Gulembo was preparing for the pantry's food distribution on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

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"For us it goes totally for food, nothing else," explained Bonnie Gose, the church's office manager.

She said the church was very excited to be receiving more pantry money this year.

"We are getting slightly more," Gose said. "Those funds are very beneficial, not only to our pantry but other pantries in the county. We are very grateful for that."

She said though the community needs to continue to support area pantries.

"People can help out by continuing to be generous in their giving as far as nonperishable items," Gose said. "We need meat. It is just the basic staples that we are looking for to help people. If we can help by giving the food out to them then maybe the funds they do have can be used to pay utility bills."

See www.efsp.unitedway.org on the World Wide Web for more information.

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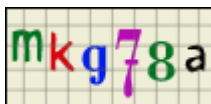
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Article published Mar 26, 2008

Local leaders, students come together to combat hunger

John Grap

The Enquirer

Community leaders, working with students from Springfield Middle School, began making bowls Tuesday afternoon as part of the Food Bank of South Central Michigan's annual Empty Bowl event. Half, of more than 40 dignitary bowl makers, participated Tuesday and the remainder will volunteer on Thursday. Area students will make an additional 500-600 bowls — all of which will be available to the public during the Cereal Festival in June.



DTE Energy Workshops Offer Help With Utility Bills

DETROIT, March 26 /PRNewswire/ -- DTE Energy is sponsoring two workshops in April -- called "Energy Solutions Round Ups" -- to help Detroit area residents who may be in danger of having their utilities shut off for nonpayment.

The workshops, which will include participation from area churches, government agencies and social service organizations, will help consumers identify resources to help manage their utility bills and learn how they can conserve energy and save money.

"We recognize how tough this winter has been for many of our customers, with Michigan's difficult economy, the cold, snowy weather and a decline in available energy assistance funding," said Joyce Hayes-Giles, senior vice president of customer service for DTE Energy. "As the heating season draws to a close, we want to help residents who have experienced high heating bills and face potential shut-off of their electric or gas service."

The DTE Energy workshops will bring together a number of agencies that can provide a wide range of services to area residents, including bill payment and shut-off protection assistance, help filing for energy tax credits, and information on energy assistance, weatherization and energy efficiency programs.

"There are a number of organizations that can provide energy assistance to Detroit residents -- but many people who qualify for help may not be aware of the services," Hayes-Giles said. "People who attend these workshops will be able to meet with agencies and organizations that can help find solutions to their particular needs."

Along with DTE Energy, participating organizations include THAW, the Michigan Department of Human Services, the Salvation Army, the WARM Training Center, Detroit's Department of Human Services and others.

DTE Energy will be sponsoring two Energy Solutions Round Ups -- one on the West Side and one on the East Side of the city.

Tuesday, April 1
Greater Grace Temple
23500 W. Seven Mile Rd., Detroit
9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 3
Perfecting Church
7616 E. Nevada, Detroit
5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

SOURCE DTE Energy

State's unemployment rate up a smidge to 7.2%

By JOHN GALLAGHER • FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER • March 26, 2008

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Michigan's unemployment rate edged upward by one-tenth of a percentage point to 7.2% during February.

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The state's total civilian labor force, which is made up of both the employed and those looking for work, continued to shrink slightly as some discouraged people apparently stopped looking for work in the state. Meanwhile, the number of jobs reported by employers in the state dipped again.

In January, Michigan's 7.1% jobless rate was the worst among the 50 states.

In February, the national unemployment rate was 4.8%.

Contact **JOHN GALLAGHER** at 313-222-5173 or gallagher@freepress.com.

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Wednesday, March 26, 2008

State jobless rate up

Louis Aguilar / The Detroit News

Michigan's unemployment rate in February edged up to 7.2 percent, according to the state's Department of Labor & Economic Growth.

February jobless rate was a one-tenth of percentage point increase from January's unemployment rate. The national unemployment rate is 4.8 percent.

"Overall, Michigan's labor market has been relatively stable since last fall," said Rick Waclawek, director of DLEG's Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives. "Since October, payroll jobs have been steady, while the jobless rate has declined slightly."

But from February 2007 to February 2008, payroll jobs in Michigan fell by 62,000 or 1.4 percent. In that period, all but one major industry sector showed significant job loss, including 37,000 more manufacturing jobs gone, followed by 10,000 less construction jobs.

Since February 2007, education and health services was the only major industry sector in Michigan to register job growth, reporting 12,000 new jobs

You can reach Louis Aguilar at (313) 222-2760 or laguilar@detnews.com.

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Wednesday, March 26, 2008

Focus: HOPE celebrates 40th year

Nonprofit running on low budget as job training enrollment rises

Kim Kozlowski / The Detroit News

DETROIT -- Focus: HOPE, a civil rights organization formed in the wake of the Detroit riots, celebrates its 40th anniversary this month with its lowest budget in memory: \$25.6 million -- a 75 percent plunge since its heyday in 1999-2000, when the operating funds peaked at \$100 million.

At the same time, enrollment in the organization's education and job training programs -- 1,148 -- is at its highest level in five years. The organization has eliminated \$12 million in debt over the last six years and is moving toward forming more partnerships to expand its reach.

Meanwhile, Focus: HOPE co-founder Eleanor Josaitis has raised about \$35 million as part of a not-yet-announced \$100 million fundraising campaign to sustain the organization that is struggling to find a new focus after pulling out of a lucrative program that supplied parts to the shrinking automotive manufacturing sector.

"These are challenging times," said Josaitis, who stepped away from the daily operations two years ago. "I refuse to be intimidated by the moment. Our mission statement has always said intelligent and practical action overcome poverty, racism and injustice. We're never going to overcome racism until people have education, jobs and opportunities in their life."

Today, Gov. Jennifer Granholm will visit Focus: HOPE's main campus on the city's west side to commemorate the 40 years that the organization has provided food assistance, community arts development, education and job training.

The organization is expected to unveil new plans for the future of the organization as it revamps its job training program in response to the region's changing economy.

"We are indeed in a transition," said Tim Duperron, interim CEO of Focus: HOPE. "The transition has been about focusing 100 percent of our resources on education and training programs. We have looked at the current market, the needs of employers in the region and adjusted our programs so we really are lined up with the market demand."

Focus: HOPE's operating budget has plummeted in recent years because it is no longer a supplier to Michigan's auto parts manufacturing sector. In 2005 it phased out the program that gave aspiring engineers hands-on experience producing parts that generated \$50 million in sales for the organization. It was among the most prosperous times for the organization.

"They are very challenged in trying to maintain themselves as a major player," said Jack Kresnak, who is writing a book about Focus: HOPE and its co-founder, the late Rev. William Cunningham. "It's not easy in this climate for any nonprofit."

Focus: HOPE now does manufacturing research and development for the Department of Defense. It also has continued to train students in manufacturing trades, engineering and information technology.

In the last two years, the organization has raised \$1.1 million for scholarships so eligible students don't have to take out loans. It also has stepped up its recruitment of students using a grant that allowed them to do some advertising and direct mail campaigns.

William Bentley, 31, is among the new batch of students who live in Focus: HOPE's neighborhood and enrolled in the information technology program.

"I was aware they were in the neighborhood," said Bentley, who was employed part-time at his church. "I wasn't sure of what they had to offer. I thought they only had the machinist training program."

He has since learned of the organization's other training programs, landed a scholarship and plans to become a computer engineer and double his previous salary. "This is too good to pass up," Bentley said.

Other new initiatives include:

- Building new community partners. Several community colleges and businesses have expressed interest in Focus: HOPE's Fast Track program that increases math, reading and life skills of students who want to further their education. The program had previously only been available to students who attend training program at Focus: HOPE.
- Forming a partnership with Presbyterian Villages of Michigan to open a \$6.2 million senior citizen residence community on the edge of its campus, the first new development in the area in more than 50 years.
- Selling a building to Neighborhood Service Organization that will be developed into affordable housing, with support services on the first and second floors for low-income residents.

"I'm trying to empower people and help them rebuild their lives," said Sheilah Clay, NSO executive director. "It's a very good partnership to bring them housing and a vocation provider is right down the street."

You can reach Kim Kozlowski at (313) 222-2024 or kkozlowski@detnews.com.

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Date: 3/26/2008 2:11:20 PM
Subject: ATTN: Isabella County and surrounding area media

Michigan Department of Human Services News Release

Contact: Maureen Sorbet (517) 373-7394

DHS summarily suspends the family day care home certificate of registration of Rebecca Chiodini

March 26, 2008

The Michigan Department of Human Services, Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing, issued an order of summary suspension and notice of intent to revoke the certificate of registration of Isabella County family day care home provider Rebecca Chiodini, #DF370034989, at 324 W. Grand, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. This action resulted from a recent investigation of the child day care family home.

The March 24, 2008 investigation found violations of the Child Care Organizations Act and administrative rules regarding child care home family, caregiver responsibilities, and performance of ICHAT check. BCAL took emergency action to protect the health, welfare, and safety of children.

Effective 6 p.m., March 25, 2008, the Summary Suspension Order prohibits Rebecca Chiodini from operating a family day care home at 324 W. Grand, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan, or at any other address or location. Accordingly, she may not accept children for care after that date and time. The order also requires Ms. Chiodini to inform all of the parents of children in her care that her certificate of registration has been suspended and that she can no longer provide day care.

Ms. Chiodini has held a certificate of registration to operate a family day care home since May 12, 1994. The certificate of registration was for six children.

Michigan law defines a day care family home "as a private home in which one but fewer than seven minor children are received for care and supervision for periods of less than 24 hours a day, unattended by a parent or legal guardian, except children related to an adult member of the family by blood, marriage, or adoption."

For more information, consult DHS Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs

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Subject: Michigan leads in electronically-transmitted child support payments

Michigan Department of Human Services News Release

Contact: Maureen Sorbet or Colleen Steinman (517) 373-7394

March 26, 2008

Michigan leads in electronically-transmitted child support payments

Michigan has become the first state in the nation to receive electronically-transmitted child support payments from the Social Security Administration.

Beginning in January 2008, the federal agency joined thousands of other employers that send child support payments collected from employees' payroll by electronic means.

"Converting these paper payments to totally electronic transactions will result in savings for the state of Michigan and for the federal government," said Marilyn Stephen, director of the Office of Child Support.

Electronic transactions save money because they are less costly than paper submission and error rates decrease. Employers have several methods to pay electronically, all of which save time and labor.

"We see employers as our partners in the collection of child support," Stephen said. "Electronic receipting makes the process faster and more efficient for everyone."

The Social Security Administration's collection payment is the single largest electronic file ever received by the child support program. Michigan's large automakers also submit collections electronically, leading the electronic payment trend. Michigan now receives about 46 percent of all child support payments through electronic transactions.

If you are an employer and would like to know more about electronic receipting of child support payments please call 1-800-817-0805.

For more information about the Child Support Program, please go to www.michigan.gov/childsupport

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